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East Guyong Quarry approval a boost for central western NSW economy

The NSW Government has approved a \$5 million basalt quarry in central western NSW that will employ up to 35 people for the next 30 years, following major changes to the project.

Up to 400,000 tonnes of basalt per year could be extracted from the East Guyong Quarry, supporting the local and regional construction industry and economy. The project will employ around 20 operational staff and 15 contracted truck drivers.

The quarry, 22km west of Bathurst, was approved by the Department of Planning under the major development State environmental planning policy (SEPP), as development for the purpose of extractive industry.

The Department's Deputy Director General Richard Pearson said the project had been subjected to a rigorous assessment, and extensive changes had been made to the plans to avoid disturbing naturally-occurring asbestos and to minimise noise impacts on neighbouring residents.

"The East Guyong site contains approximately 15 million tonnes of basalt, and the quarry will be developed over seven stages," Mr Pearson said.

"The project will satisfy future construction demand for aggregate material in the Orange and Bathurst regions, such as construction fill or road base.

"The regional demand for these quarry products is expected to increase as the population expands and infrastructure upgrades are undertaken.

"The project will provide a reliable way to source these quarry resources locally, and will replace a quarry in Bathurst which is due to close this year."

Mr Pearson said the approval ensured that the quarry and infrastructure would not be located on the portion of the site which contains tremolite, a naturally occurring asbestos mineral that is common in the area.

He said the proponent, Hanson Construction Materials Pty Ltd, had agreed to relocate its infrastructure and dam to a part of the site where tremolite only occurs at depths greater than 5m below the surface, where it will not be disturbed. No quarrying will occur in areas affected by tremolite.

In addition, the Department imposed other stringent conditions to ensure asbestos is not disturbed. These conditions will require Hanson to:

- Assess and map the entire site for asbestos minerals to make sure it is not disturbed during construction;

- Prepare an asbestos management plan for the site;
- Install fencing around existing surface outcrops of asbestos minerals on the site;
- Develop a stringent airborne asbestos fibre monitoring program, which will require that airborne asbestos does not exceed 0.01 fibres per mL of air;
- Undertake community consultation during construction and regularly report the monitoring results to neighbouring landowners and regulatory authorities.

To protect the amenity of neighbouring residents, the Department also imposed strict limits on the operating hours of the quarry and restrict the time when blasting could occur.

“The proponent was seeking approval to operate the quarry 24 hours a day, but the night time noise emissions would have caused unacceptable impacts at neighbouring homes,” Mr Pearson said.

“Instead, quarrying operations will be restricted to daylight hours after 6am on Monday to Friday, and 7am to 1pm on Saturday. No operations will occur on Sundays or public holidays.

“A further condition allows an extension of operating hours only if the proponent gains the approval of neighbouring properties.

“Other conditions will limit the hours when blasting can occur to minimise the impact on the surrounding area, ensure appropriate monitoring and require ongoing communication with residents.”

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